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Chairman: Mr. Balarezo ..... (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Sustainable development (A/59/25, A/59/81-E/2004/63, A/59/115, A/59/158, A/59/262)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/59/167 and A/59/220)

(b) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/59/173)

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(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/59/197)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/59/197)

(g) United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

1. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that two years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the momentum for implementation remained strong. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/59/220), the sharper focus on implementation adopted at the Johannesburg Summit was inspiring Governments and civil society stakeholders to take renewed action to pursue sustainable development.

2. Two emerging trends could be highlighted in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: the gradual move towards achieving specific sustainable development goals, and the integration of sustainable development principles into national and local development strategies. In various regions of the world efforts were under way to protect watersheds, partnerships were being created to extend piped water connections to rural townships and elementary schools were being provided with latrines. Although their immediate impact was local, the sheer number of such initiatives changed the quality of life of millions of people. Furthermore, approximately 150 Governments were in various stages of implementing national sustainable development strategies, and the integration of sustainable development principles was increasingly widespread.

3. Voluntary partnerships for sustainable development were also playing an important role: as of June 2004, 291 partnerships had been registered with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Most employed a bottom-up approach, using pilot projects to test their strategies before replicating them at the national, subregional and regional levels. More and more partnerships would be reporting to the Commission on progress made towards implementation of their objectives and the total amount invested in them, already estimated at some US$ 872 million, was therefore likely to rise.

4. Within the United Nations system, coordinated implementation had led to significant progress in the preceding year. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) had taken steps to establish or strengthen inter-agency collaborative arrangements. It had confirmed UN-Water as the inter-agency mechanism for implementation of water-related Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg targets and had set up UN-Energy as a new system-wide mechanism for addressing energy-related issues. The regional commissions had also played an active role, organizing regional meetings and ad hoc sessions to promote implementation of the commitments relating to water, sanitation and human settlements in their regions. Furthermore, on the World Day for Water in March 2004, the Secretary-General had announced the establishment of a high-level advisory board on water and sanitation. Chaired by the former prime minister of Japan, Mr. Hashimoto, and composed of eminent persons from government, civil society and the private sector, the Board would seek to motivate stakeholders to meet the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg targets. The Board should help raise the political visibility of water and sanitation issues and mobilize human and financial resources to advance the water and sanitation agenda.

5. Despite those encouraging signs, overall progress in addressing the obstacles to implementation of

sustainable development objectives remained inadequate. At its twelfth session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had concluded that a considerable number of countries were not on track with regard to the targets of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 and improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. In many countries, slums were in fact growing at an alarming pace, sanitation had not received as much attention as water and neither had much prominence in poverty-reduction strategy papers. The Commission had also noted that the persistence of poverty continued to hinder efforts to achieve progress in providing basic services and that the lack of financial resources, technology and capacity remained the major constraints for developing countries.

6. The Commission had agreed that levels of financing were far from adequate and that development partners should, in a spirit of mutual accountability, meet the Monterrey commitments. Many members had also stressed the need for exploring multiple avenues of financial resource mobilization, including partial loan guarantees, special facilities, revolving funds, microcredit schemes and debt swaps. Agreement on practical measures to overcome obstacles in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements would be at the heart of the Commission's programme of work for its thirteenth session in the spring of 2005. Those discussions must be tackled with a sense of urgency in order to expedite implementation of the water, sanitation and human settlement goals and targets agreed to in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the International Year of Freshwater, 2003 (A/59/167) took stock of the activities undertaken during the year at all levels and focused on partnerships and alliances established for the year's activities. It also examined the potential for further action beyond 2003 within the framework of the International Decade of Action "Water for Life".

8. His remarks concerning the issues before the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth session were likewise valid for other areas of sustainable development. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, with regard to Millennium Development Goal 7, even regions which had made significant progress towards achieving many other goals had a poorer record on environmental issues. As a result, although protected areas had increased in all regions, there had been a loss of forest cover in some parts of the world, notably those with tropical forests. Moreover, although energy use and per capita carbon dioxide emissions had fallen in the economies in transition with the decline in industrial production in the 1990s, they had increased in the developing countries.

9. Progress in the implementation of the global conventions relating to the environment had been mixed. The recent Russian decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol was the most positive news in relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, adopted in 1994, had entered into force in 1996, but a lack of financial resources had limited its implementation. There had however been progress towards implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the adoption of measurable indicators and specific goals to reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 and the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in September 2003. In the area of deforestation and forest degradation, nine international processes involving 150 countries that encompassed 85 per cent of the world's forests had made progress in developing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. In all those areas, despite progress made, positive trends must be reinforced in order to reverse the negative trends of climate change, biodiversity loss and reduction in forest cover, currently the three major environmental issues faced by the world.

10. The issue of sustainable development in some of the most vulnerable countries — the small island developing States — should also be the subject of special reflection. The international meeting in Mauritius in January 2005 would afford an opportunity for building on the Johannesburg momentum and entering into specific and time-bound commitments to support the sustainable development efforts of the small island developing States. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/59/173, the Caribbean small island developing States in particular were undertaking a wide range of activities to promote an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area. That approach, which embraced environmental, social and economic as well as legal and institutional elements, should result in a strategy for the effective management and protection of the marine resources of the area.

11. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator),

speaking on agenda item 87 (c), said that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction was the centrepiece of United Nations efforts to reduce the serious and growing impact that natural hazards had on communities and countries: the number of persons affected by such hazards had doubled, and economic losses had more than tripled, over the past decade.

12. As stated in the report on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/59/228), the Strategy had sparked a number of substantive reports, programmes and strategic visions on ways of reducing risk and vulnerability to natural hazards, as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Deserving of special mention was the flagship publication for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, *Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*, which had been issued in a renewed version earlier in the year; a new early warning platform, established in Bonn (Germany) under the auspices of the Strategy's secretariat in order to sustain dialogue on early warning and to develop systematic approaches to the topic; and the regional Strategy outreach programmes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, which had supported national programmes and regional strategies for disaster reduction and innovative public awareness partnerships.

13. The preparations for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, due to take place in Kobe (Japan) in 2005, were advancing well, in terms of both the organizational and logistical aspects and the intergovernmental segment, thematic segment and public forum. The second session of the Preparatory Committee, held the previous October in Geneva, had reviewed organizational aspects as well as the content of the draft framework for the period 2005-2015, tentatively named "Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, in support of sustainable development". The conference was expected to be a milestone event in disaster risk reduction, in terms of enhancing countries' risk reduction, an essential condition for meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It would, in particular, identify ways to incorporate risk reduction measures into action to reduce poverty.

14. The tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2004, would discuss the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in order to join the international community's climate change and risk reduction efforts. The Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group's formulation of a consultative policy paper on climate change and risk reduction, with the support of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and a Task Force, should increase understanding of the interlinkage of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

15. Regarding reduction of the impact of the El Niño phenomenon and related international cooperation, the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon in Guayaquil (Ecuador), launched by the Government of Ecuador with the support of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Strategy secretariat in 2003, had continued its work on climate risk indexing for agriculture, modelling of risk for El Niño-related transmission of malaria and organizing climate-modelling workshops. A consolidated international board, comprising representatives of the Government of Ecuador, WMO, the Strategy secretariat, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and other stakeholders, was expected to meet in late 2004.

16. In conclusion, he highlighted the key recommendations stemming from the report on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/59/228). Firstly, Governments and other stakeholders were encouraged to take full stock of the importance of the 2005 Kobe World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which would enable them to improve risk reduction mechanisms and better integrate risk reduction into their development strategies. Secondly, since the review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would be completed in Mauritius in 2005, immediately prior to the Kobe Conference, the Conference should consider the recommendations that emerged from that review relating to the reduction of those States' vulnerability to natural hazards, thereby linking the follow-up of both events. Thirdly, if the Millennium Development Goals were to be achieved, then disaster reduction would need to be firmly adopted as a core function of the United Nations. Lastly, the General Assembly had requested, in its resolution 58/214, that adequate financial and administrative resources should be allocated to the inter-agency Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It would also be desirable for Governments to contribute to the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction and continue to explore mechanisms for resourcing longer-term activities to reduce the impact of natural disasters.

17. **Mr. Moeini** (Islamic Republic of Iran), referring to the remarks of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said that, while he recognized the special importance that partners assigned to sustainable development, which had made it possible to muster substantial resources, in the long run a large share of those resources came from the public sector, a situation that was at odds with the partnership philosophy adopted. He asked the Under-Secretary-General whether there were plans to remedy that situation.

18. Regarding implementation, he observed that the problem was one not only of resources, but also of failure at technical fulfilment of the commitments undertaken.

19. He requested further details concerning the approach adopted to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, since he had thought it was meant to be global.

20. **Ms. Zubčević** (Croatia), referring to the remarks of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, asked what was being done to link the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

21. She also asked whether the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs could clarify his statement at a recent meeting to the effect that there were plans to strengthen the support provided by United Nations agencies for implementing the outcome of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. She would also like to know how the early warning mechanisms of which he had just spoken would be linked to overall action for sustainable development.

22. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), replying to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said that a large part of the funds invested in the partnerships indeed originated either directly in the public sector, or else indirectly, which was the case when subsidized NGOs participated in a partnership. The situation was disturbing and the private sector should increase its contribution to the financing of partnerships. That contribution could be either philanthropic or purely commercial in that funds paid into a partnership could constitute pre-investments, and the partnership could become a joint commercial venture like any other.

23. Regarding non-fulfilment of commitments, it was true that some commitments were inadequately fulfilled, if at all, a fact that applied to all regions and in all areas relating to the agenda item under consideration.

24. Replying to the representative of Croatia, he said that all the Millennium Development Goals were taken into account in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. That was certainly true not only of Goal 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), but also of Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability).

25. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that action to reduce natural hazards and countries' vulnerability to disasters was, first and foremost, a development effort rather than a humanitarian effort. The entire United Nations family, all Member States and non-governmental organizations must make a concerted contribution to that effort. Reducing vulnerability and promoting risk reduction was much more useful than intervening to provide humanitarian assistance after a disaster. In Haiti, which had recently been devastated by a hurricane, more effective and systematic prevention arrangements, such as those put in place in Cuba and other island States, would clearly have reduced the damage. It would be very useful if the humanitarian partners would work with their development counterparts in order to reduce countries' vulnerability.

26. He hoped that the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe (Japan) in January 2005, would be an excellent occasion for bringing all the interlocutors together. Inter-agency cooperation was under way in parallel with the preparation of the World Conference and its follow-up. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction had participants from 26 United Nations bodies, regional organizations and civil society organizations and had set up working groups and subgroups in many fields, such as forest-fire prevention and early earthquake warning. The bodies concerned had agreed to study each point, first internally and then by sector, in order to determine how they could each identify follow-up action and open the way for measures to support implementation of the outcome of the World Conference.

27. The inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which reported to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, and the Task Force had appointed a think tank to determine the most effective means of supporting follow-up, including drafting of reports, sharing information and strengthening the capacity of vulnerable communities.

28. Citing the representative of Croatia, he acknowledged that if an early warning was not preceded by an intervention and early risk reduction measures, the damage could be so grave that humanitarian action could repair it only superficially. That was why the scientific community, the Member States and the humanitarian assistance and development bodies needed to join forces in order to reduce risk. It was very important for donors to increase grants used to finance risk reduction. Some European donors had decided to earmark 15 per cent of their official development assistance to hazard reduction. South-South cooperation was also fundamental, enabling countries exposed to natural disasters to exchange important experience and information on ways of reducing their vulnerability, loss of human life and even the cost of natural disasters.

29. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), introducing the report on the implementation of the United Nations environmental conventions (A/59/197), said that outstanding issues relating to the Kyoto Protocol had been resolved, that the institutional framework of both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol had been strengthened and that a wide range of options for limiting greenhouse emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change were being explored.

30. There was virtually universal recognition that the adverse effects of climate change were real and undermined national and international efforts to achieve sustainable development. The growing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events clearly illustrated those adverse effects. The economic cost of dealing with those effects was steadily increasing and their insurability was posing a problem. To date, 189 States had ratified the Convention, the latest being Turkey. The Kyoto Protocol had been ratified by 126 States, including developing countries which produced 44.2 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions. She welcomed the Russian Government's proposal to the Duma to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and pointed out that the Protocol would enter into force 90 days after the Russian Government had deposited its instrument of ratification in New York.

31. The Clean Development Mechanism was already functioning. Sixty-four States had designated national authorities that would endorse the relevant projects, and promising areas included landfill gas capture and flaring, incineration of hydrofluorocarbon waste streams, fuel switching and renewable energy, such as biopower from rice husks.

32. The Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention had adopted important decisions so as to mobilize resources that would make the Special Climate Change Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund operational. The Special Climate Change Fund would initially provide resources for adaptation and technology transfer and its associated capacity-building. The Least Developed Countries Fund would continue to support those countries' preparation of national adaptation programmes. There were plans for all 48 official least developed countries to receive full-cost funding for the preparation of their programmes.

33. Regarding options for dealing with climate change, 117 developing countries had submitted their initial national communications, and several had also submitted their second communications or had started working on them. At the same time, the industrialized countries would need to take further action to implement policies and measures that would contribute towards modifying longer-term trends in anthropogenic emissions.

34. Citing the report, she said that the high-level political debate during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, which had been attended by 70 ministers, had focused on adaptation and mitigation measures, sustainable development and progress evaluation. It had been recognized that implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures involved synergy and complementarity among economic growth, greater equity, poverty alleviation and environmental protection. The participants had noted that measures such as energy-efficient projects, introduction of renewable energy sources, and development of new technologies could help decouple economic growth from growth in emissions, in addition to achieving social and environmental benefits. Moreover, they had observed that the Protocol was already changing the way one thought about climate, energy and investment.

35. Many countries were in favour of emission trading schemes. Schemes had been formulated, in several countries, including the United Kingdom, and Japan was preparing to introduce a pilot scheme. The private sector had also taken steps in that direction. Large oil companies such as British Petroleum and Shell had established internal trading systems. The Chicago Climate Exchange was operational, which meant that trading carbon was now possible on the

Chicago Stock Exchange; carbon was now a commodity. Local governments, cities and companies were also taking action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

36. She hoped that Governments would take specific action to deal with the causes and effects of climate change at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires in December.

37. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa), introducing the report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (A/59/197, chap. II), said that the Conference of the Parties at its sixth session, held in 2003, had decided that the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, at its third session, would review updates to reports already available and/or new reports submitted by African States parties. At its third session, which would take place in Bonn (Germany) from 27 April to 6 May 2005, the Committee would consider global and sectoral issues relating to the progress made in implementing the declaration on the commitments under the Convention. He thanked the secretariat of the Convention, which would facilitate the organization of regional consultations to allow regions other than Africa to take part in the discussion. He thanked the Governments of Italy, Norway and Sweden for their contributions to the preparation of the third session of the Committee. The World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the International Fund for Agricultural Development had also helped developing States parties, especially in Africa, with the preparation of their reports and the organization of regional consultations.

38. The secretariat of the Convention had continued to work in close cooperation with all States parties which had not yet adopted national action programmes and with other interested partners, in order to help them to prepare or finalize their action programmes. Those measures would be described in a report to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh session in 2005.

39. Having described the activities of the secretariat of the Convention at the subregional, interregional and regional levels, he commended the Government of Venezuela for its generous contribution, which had helped to finance activities in the context of cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. At the regional level, the priority defined for Africa in the New Partnership for Africa's Development, adopted in December 2003, was the fight against land degradation and desertification. At the subregional level, in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the secretariat of the Convention had been involved in formulating projects on combating desertification.

40. As for the collaboration of the secretariat of the Convention with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), he drew attention to two important initiatives undertaken to enhance implementation of the Convention: the partnership established on a pilot basis by the secretariat of the Fund with implementing and executing agencies and the TerrAfrica initiative of the World Bank.

41. The current year marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention, which now had 191 States parties. Referring to the main recommendations made in the report for consideration by the General Assembly, he emphasized that 75 per cent of those living in extreme poverty lived in rural areas, which made desertification a serious obstacle to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. It could cause tension because the shortage of arable land could lead to conflicts within rural populations, then between States, and could threaten peace and security. In order to achieve the Goals, it was therefore necessary to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in order to create favourable conditions for the prevention of conflicts over access to natural resources and land.

42. **Mr. Zedan** (Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing the report on implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/59/197, chap. III), said that Thailand had ratified the Convention, bringing the number of States parties to 188. To date, 108 countries and the European Community had ratified or acceded to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. He called on those States that had not yet done so to ratify the Protocol as soon as possible so that they could play an active role in the new international regime.

43. In February 2004, the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on

Biological Diversity and the first meeting of the Conference serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, an account of which was contained in the report, had been held in Kuala Lumpur.

44. Since it had been the first time that the Conference of the Parties had met since the World Summit on Sustainable Development, its main concerns had included the need to integrate the biological diversity commitments made in Johannesburg into the work of the Convention and translate them into concrete action.

45. Participants in the Conference of the Parties had expressed the opinion that the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in relation to combating poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation would be dependent on the realization of a commitment to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss. That was why the participants in the Conference had urged parties, Governments and international organizations to implement activities undertaken for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals in ways that were consistent with the objectives of the Convention.

46. The Conference of the Parties had developed a framework to assess progress towards the targets set for 2010. It had mandated the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to negotiate an international regime on access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits resulting from their use. It had adopted a programme of work on protected areas that provided for the establishment of comprehensive, effectively managed, and ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas. It had also adopted new programmes of work on mountain biodiversity and technology transfer and cooperation, and it had decided to develop a programme of work on island biodiversity to be considered at its eighth meeting.

47. The Conference had also emphasized the need for rapid action to deal with threats to biological diversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, on the basis of the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach. It had requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention to support work on the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for the creation of new marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction.

48. Referring to the strengthening of cooperation between the secretariats of environmental conventions, he listed a number of workshops which had been held at the national and international levels to strengthen synergies between the Conventions.

49. Lastly, describing the outcome of the work of the first Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, he said that the participants had established procedures and mechanisms designed to facilitate decision-making by parties of import. The Meeting had adopted procedures and mechanisms for promoting compliance under the Protocol, including the establishment of a Compliance Committee, and had initiated the development of international rules and procedures regarding liability and redress for damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms, which were expected to be completed within four years.

50. **Ms. Bah Diallo** (Assistant Director-General for Education a.i., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that sustainable development was an imperative for human development, and that the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was attracting a high level of enthusiasm among partners at all levels. That was a sign that the peoples of the world wished to learn to live sustainably.

51. When the Decade had been announced, Governments had been invited to reorient their education systems in support of sustainable development. Sustainable development involved society, the economy and the environment, but also related to basic human needs and to human rights. Adding the essential cultural dimension led to approaches to sustainable development that were intersectoral and interdisciplinary, an integrated vision which required educational processes that were suitably constructed and conducted. Promoting sustainable development called for the provision of quality education which involved the transmission of certain values (respect for human life, for others, for difference and diversity, for the environment and for the resources of the planet) and a sense of justice, responsibility, rights, human dignity and especially equality. The vision of the Decade was to create a world where everyone could benefit from education and learn the values, behaviours, capabilities and lifestyles required for a sustainable present and future and for positive societal transformation.

52. The proposed global implementation plan offered a range of options for all who wished to participate in the Decade as their circumstances permitted. Brainstormed by hundreds of participants, it had been

reviewed by researchers and specialists before being submitted to an expert group set up to advise the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of the Decade. It briefly described the challenges and outlined the type of education that development partners considered most likely to facilitate sustainable development. Seven strategies were available to the wide range of stakeholders in the Decade: advocacy and vision-building; consultation and ownership; partnership and networks; capacity-building and training; research and innovation; use of information and communication technologies; and monitoring and evaluation. All local and global stakeholders would find in it programme models, projects and initiatives which, taken together, could be used to move forward, while the last section set out an implementation timeline for the Decade.

53. It was through education that people developed their full potential, whether as individuals or as part of the family, neighbourhood, country or the world. But they needed to know how to adapt and rise to the challenges of the current world and to assume their responsibility towards future generations. Above all, it was the content and processes of education that would help the world's peoples to learn to live together sustainably.

54. The milestones to that future were: (a) the tangible and measurable Millennium Development Goals, within which education was an input and an indicator; (b) the Education for All initiative, which aimed at providing universal access to quality education; (c) the United Nations Literacy Decade, which laid the groundwork for all forms of structured learning; and (d) the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which promoted a set of values, capabilities and behavioural outcomes valid for all situations.

55. **Mr. Toepfer** (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) said that as issues of international peace and security, particularly the war on terror, the role of multilateralism and the risks of environmental degradation took centre stage globally, UNEP was assessing the peace and environment situation of post-conflict countries. It was collecting the scientific data required to review and institute early-warning systems for improving global governance of the environment. The UNEP work programme was not fragmented, given the correlation among all its programme activities.

56. Providing ecological services would also help advance pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. The issue was not so much water preservation for environmental protection as the creation of an enabling environment for water conservation. Upstream forests must be preserved in order to protect humid areas and thereby safeguard downstream water resources. Only through such an ecosystemic approach could the integrated management of water resources be envisaged. The matter was under study by a working group that UNEP had set up with the cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and UN-Habitat.

57. He drew attention to the entry into force of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, whose secretariat would be established in Geneva and at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome. Chemicals deserved special attention because of their effects on the environment and agriculture and the need to meet demand from a rapidly growing population by practising diversity-friendly bio-farming. What was more, the text of the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants had been finalized. UNEP was making speedy progress towards the creation of an integrated chemicals management system and expected to help build by 2020 a world where human health and the environment would be free from chemical hazards. That objective had been set in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan, notwithstanding the strategic importance of the chemical industry to poverty reduction.

58. UNEP had conducted an environmental assessment of small island developing States and would be bringing useful information to the forthcoming international meeting in Mauritius.

59. The Intergovernmental Working Group set up to develop a strategic plan on technology support and capacity-building would hold its third and last preparatory meeting in Bali, Indonesia, with the objective of contributing, together with UNDP, to environmental protection capacity-building.

60. Since the application of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, the number of donors had increased significantly, and it was to be hoped that the trend would continue.

61. UNEP planned to go beyond Millennium Development Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability to tackle the issues of poverty and hunger, gender equity and the forging of a global partnership for development.

62. **Mr. Ashe** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that biological diversity in maritime zones beyond national jurisdiction was of undeniable importance to some countries. At the last Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, no new programme areas had been added. Perhaps the Executive Secretary of the Convention secretariat could state whether the issue would be included in existing programmes, failing which it would lose its importance.

63. Given the importance to the parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification of securing more funds, and given the need to replenish the GEF, he wondered whether the Executive Secretary planned, in the course of his third term in office, to find other modalities of financing the implementation of the Convention, regional sources included.

64. Noting that the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also marked the tenth anniversary of the coming into force of the Convention, and taking into account the statement of President Putin on the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, he asked whether the time had not come to encourage all the Parties to commit themselves more resolutely to the implementation of the Convention.

65. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that more detailed indications of the work done by the Joint Liaison Group would be helpful in future reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of environment-related conventions. With regard to the Kyoto Protocol, he welcomed the developments in the implementation of the flexible arrangements built into that instrument but deplored the lack of commitment by developed countries.

66. He asked the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification whether the draft memorandum of agreement between the Convention secretariat and the GEF would be ready for the next Conference of Parties to the Convention. Referring to the issue of GEF replenishment earlier mentioned by the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, he wondered what could be done at the current stage to secure financing for sustainable land management projects.

67. As to the establishment of a working group on biological diversity in those maritime zones beyond national jurisdiction, he would like to know from the Executive Secretary whether the legal aspects would be included in the working group's terms of reference, given that such issues were also addressed in another forum.

68. Referring to the proposed draft implementation plan mentioned by the Assistant Director-General for Education a.i. of UNESCO, he would like to know if it took into account the need to mobilize more resources and strengthen inter-agency cooperation to reach the goal of basic education for all.

69. Lastly, more information was needed on the extent to which additional contributions collected by UNEP thanks to the voluntary indicative scale of contributions could help to finance the implementation of the intergovernmental strategic plan.

70. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that he would like to have further details of the technical cooperation established by UNEP to help countries to obtain an integrated water resource management plan. Citing the need to mobilize additional resources to implement the intergovernmental strategic plan, he asked whether it was possible to make progress on that front.

71. **Mr. Anaedu** (Nigeria) said that the early warning and monitoring mechanisms were important, but he wondered about the degree of readiness to go to the next phase, namely early intervention. With respect to interventions, the results were unsatisfactory wherever there was a need to address a difficult situation on the ground. Nigeria welcomed the imminent entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, which was crucial to the question of climate change. Nevertheless, it should be noted that developing countries did not have the necessary technology, capacity and resources to ensure the implementation of the provisions relating to the clean development mechanism and other initiatives associated with climate change management. It was unclear what was being done to help them in that respect. Concerning desertification, it was surprising that the Convention to Combat Desertification had not been mentioned in the preliminary version of the report on the Millennium Project even though it had been widely accepted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development that the Convention would be an important instrument for poverty elimination.

72. **Ms. Campos** (Venezuela) was gratified by the mention of the support that her country had given to the implementation process of the Convention to Combat Desertification. For Venezuela, desertification was a problem faced not only at the international level but also at the local level, especially in rural areas. The action it was taking to combat desertification was part of a strategy that also sought to eliminate poverty and

famine caused by the deterioration of the environment. Her Government paid particular attention to the programmes of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and had been cooperating with it since becoming a party to the Convention. Her Government reaffirmed its strong determination to continue to support the implementation of that instrument.

73. **Mr. Zedan** (Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity), replying to a question on the prospects for cooperation between the working group to be established on biological diversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said that the Conference of Parties had recognized the need to improve conservation and sustainable use of the flora and fauna in such areas. The Conference had therefore called on the General Assembly and other international organizations to take the necessary measures to eliminate or avoid destructive practices in accordance with international law, urged the relevant organizations to develop mechanisms to establish marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and requested the secretariat to cooperate in the work under way on conservation and sustainable use of deep seabed resources. Replying next to the question put by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda concerning the possible adoption of separate work programmes under the Convention, he said that the work could be carried out within the framework of existing programmes, including those relating to marine and coastal biological diversity or to protected areas. In some instances, the main impetus would most likely be given by other organizations and not necessarily by the Convention secretariat. However, since the work programmes established within the framework of the Convention were relevant, there was a need to take into account the links existing between them and other initiatives. With respect to legal matters affecting biological diversity in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, the secretariat was cooperating closely with the International Seabed Authority, UNEP and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and, when the working groups were created, he would notify the Conference of the Parties and lend them his support.

74. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) said that it was not possible to attain the Millennium Development Goals without making an effort to change things, particularly with respect to investment in rural areas, where 75 per cent of the world's poor lived. Consequently, the main goal, not only for the secretariat of the Convention but also other entities concerned such as FAO, must be to think about what could be done to focus attention on rural areas. The international community was not being called upon to make inordinate efforts. The problems had already been identified and solutions had been found. It was known that there was a need to tackle the problem of soil degradation. It mattered little whether the approaches were unilateral or multilateral so long as there was a determination to act. As the Executive Director of UNEP had pointed out, time was of the essence. But the international community had the necessary tools, and the means of implementation to halt desertification were within reach. Even if the funds were lacking, the international community must mobilize itself further. In any case, it would be enough, at the outset, if countries honoured the commitments made under the Monterrey Consensus.

75. Before resorting to new legislation to prevent flows of migrants, it must be noted that the problem of migration would not arise if persons living in drylands had the opportunity to enhance their productive capacity. The representative of Nigeria was right to emphasize that the Convention to Combat Desertification was an important instrument for eliminating poverty. That factor would undoubtedly be taken into consideration in the context of the Millennium Project, because it was impossible to improve economic and social conditions without giving the necessary attention to the problems of soil degradation and desertification.

76. He expressed his gratitude to the representative of Venezuela for her country's support. He also paid tribute to the many countries that had recently adopted a programme of action to combat desertification. That issue affected developing countries but not only them; all countries had a role to play to help to establish the conditions that would allow for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals within the agreed time frame.

77. Concerning the question put by the Iranian delegation, the Executive Director of UNEP indicated that the Programme was cooperating with the secretariat of the GEF in the finalization of a memorandum of understanding between the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Council of the Facility. All Parties to the Convention must lend their support so that agreement might be reached on the best way of using the resources available to the Facility to resolve the problems relating to desertification.

78. **Mr. Toepfer** (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme) said that the additional funds collected thanks to the voluntary indicative scale of contributions would not be enough. More must be done. UNEP, for its part, sought to integrate the issue of capacity-building into all the discussions on strategic agreements conducted with the donor community. It should be recalled that that issue was also connected with the coordination of capacity-building activities throughout the United Nations system and that it was therefore necessary to define a common approach. The work done in the area of early warning and assessment had been mentioned, but it constituted only one aspect of the work under way. UNEP had a very broad capacity-building programme. That issue would certainly be at the core of discussions during the meeting to be held by the intergovernmental working group in Bali.

79. With respect to integrated water resource management, it was essential to attain the target set for 2005. Failure to reach that short-term target would have a disastrous effect, given its paramount importance within the framework of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and also because it would augur badly for the longer-term targets. As had been mentioned, an inter-agency working group had been established. He therefore sincerely hoped that progress could be made in that area during the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was also true there were additional needs in terms of human and financial capacity. That issue would be at the forefront of the work programme.

80. He recognized that action must not be limited to the development of early warning mechanisms. UNEP had played a very active role in post-conflict situations, but more emphasis should be placed on early warning and action in order to defuse tension. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), two assessments (one dealing, in particular, with the Central Asian republics) had been conducted, in which the links between ecological problems, the situation of various ethnic groups and migration had been highlighted. In his view, those assessments were important instruments that identified the sectors in which rapid action was needed. In that connection, by way of example, he referred to the anticipated problems in the Lake Chad region. In that specific case, assessments alone would not suffice: there was a need to promote the adoption of a number of measures in collaboration with other partners in order to prevent future conflicts. Those considerations had several things in common with the observations made on the subject of the precautionary principle by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. In that connection, UNEP had begun to draft a new memorandum of understanding with the Under-Secretary-General so that information gathered about the environment could be used directly for precautionary and preventive measures.

81. **Ms. Bah Diallo** (Assistant Director-General for Education a.i., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recalled that the international community had made a commitment to free up the resources necessary to finance the development of basic education in countries that were willing to take action in that field. A number of countries had already adopted national action plans, but the funds required for their implementation were still not available. Every year, the Director-General of UNESCO convened a high-level group to assess the situation. Unfortunately, the representatives of the developing countries were frequently absent from those meetings. At the next meeting, which would take place in Brazil in November, a new appeal would be launched for the mobilization of the resources necessary for achieving the objective of education for all. Cooperation between organizations was totally indispensable. UNESCO had already established relations with several bodies and intended to pursue that form of cooperation. It was also important to include universities, since they carried out important work in the area of capacity-building and research. Non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector also had a significant role to play. Lastly, UNESCO would campaign for respect for the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Monterrey Consensus.

82. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) took the view that the positive new developments in the Russian Federation should have a favourable effect on the results of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Buenos Aires in December. During the high-level segment, panel discussions would be held in order to assess progress made and identify future activities 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention. Those discussions would, for the first time, give Parties the opportunity to put forward their ideas on how they planned to continue working on their commitments after 2012. The representative of Nigeria had rightly emphasized the importance of capacity-building in connection with the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which was an

important component of the package of measures adopted by the Parties with a view to strengthening capacity within the framework of the Convention and would be reviewed at the session of the Conference of the Parties. On numerous occasions, the Parties and the Executive Board of CDM had stressed the importance of broad geographical representation within the Mechanism. Consequently, she welcomed the fact that 64 Parties had already appointed their national authorities, which would be empowered to approve projects before their submission. In addition, the Executive Board of CDM and the secretariat of the Convention supported the various activities undertaken with a view to strengthening capacities relating to the Mechanism.

83. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) emphasized the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action for both the sustainable development of small island developing States, one of the most vulnerable groups of countries, and the environmental health of the planet. The social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of the small island developing States had been made glaringly obvious by the horrendous destruction wrought by the cyclones and hurricanes in the Pacific and Caribbean regions in 2004. The International Meeting to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, to be held in Mauritius in January 2005, and the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, must give high priority to helping those countries to build greater resilience and enhance their preparedness to enable them to deal with ever more frequent natural disasters.

84. Over the past year, the small island developing States had participated actively in the preparations for the International Meeting. Following the regional meetings held in late 2003, an Interregional Preparatory Meeting had been held in the Bahamas in early 2004, following which the Nassau Declaration and a Strategy for the Alliance of Small Island States had been adopted. That document had formed the working basis for the preparatory meeting in April and the informal consultations in May. Given that a number of critical issues remained outstanding, it would be appropriate to recommend that the General Assembly should acknowledge that the informal consultations scheduled for 8 and 9 January 2005 in Mauritius were required. The international community must now carry forward to the International Meeting in Mauritius the spirit of goodwill that had characterized the preparatory process, and the Meeting must not only generate a renewal of the global commitment to the development of the small island States, but must also produce tangible results in the daily lives of their people.

85. On the United Nations side, invitations to the International Meeting had been sent to all Member States and observers as well as to non-member States, civil society organizations and NGOs. He took the opportunity to urge Member States once again to send delegations at the highest level possible. The participation of the major groups identified in Agenda 21, United Nations bodies within and outside the system, the Bretton Woods institutions and private sector organizations would be essential. In addition, regional intergovernmental organizations, with the support of the relevant United Nations bodies, must play a more active role in the promotion and follow-up of the implementation of the outcome documents of the Mauritius Meeting. The high-level segment should devote particular attention to, inter alia, practical ways of carrying forward the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

86. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction was also of particular relevance to the most vulnerable countries — the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States — which were regularly ravaged by natural disasters and faced obstacles on account of the weakness of their infrastructure or geographical impediments. Ten years after the historic Yokohama Conference, the human and economic losses due to natural disasters had increased in recent years and, in general, the world had become more vulnerable to them, with the poor and socially disadvantaged groups from developing countries the most severely affected. The objectives on which the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World were based consisted in saving human lives and protecting property, and those documents favoured the development of a global culture of prevention and the adoption of a policy of self-reliance in each vulnerable country and community that included capacity-building and the allocation and efficient use of resources. The Yokohama Strategy had agreed to give priority attention to developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable among them, and to assist Governments to implement the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and the Barbados Programme of Action at the national and regional levels. The main thrust of the Yokohama Strategy for the most vulnerable countries should be

reiterated, taking into account the Brussels and Almaty Programmes of Action and the outcome of the Mauritius Meeting. In addition, specific directions and clearer priorities for action at all levels must be developed in order to ensure the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and to support the achievement of the objectives of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration.

87. The implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was linked to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was also inextricably linked to efforts to eradicate poverty and bring about sustainable human development. In view of the vulnerability of countries to the effects of desertification, climate change and diminishing biological diversity, the implementation of the Convention was a matter of urgency. It was also vital to consolidate activities and mechanisms related to the implementation of the three conventions and reporting procedures and to strengthen international cooperation and partnerships in order to ensure that their provisions were implemented comprehensively and efficiently.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.